

Six years ago this month, in June 2001, Tropical Storm Allison hit Southeast Texas. Until Hurricane Katrina, this storm would become the costliest tropical storm in U.S. history. Flash flooding initiated quite rapidly during Houston's rush hour late Friday afternoon and on into the evening hours. Widespread street flooding was the initial threat, but the high rainfall amounts forced almost all the major Houston area bayou systems into severe flooding, with some to record levels. All major freeways in the Houston area were severely flooded at at least one location during this event. During this single event alone, rainfall in Harris County ranged from just 2 inches in the extreme west to in excess of 20 inches over Green's Bayou in the east. Countywide, the average rainfall was 8 inches with over two-thirds of the county receiving over 10 inches.

The total damage across Southeast Texas approached \$5 billion (\$4.88 billion in Harris County alone). Twenty-two deaths were caused by Allison, with each of these fatalities occurred in Harris County. At this time, thunderstorms began to train and merge across the Houston metro area, and the system evolved into a powerful complex right over the most populated portion of our CWA that evening. This complex progressed south and east into the early morning hours of Saturday, June 9. Very heavy rainfall was observed for up to 10 hours in some locations, and rainfall rates of 4 inches or more per hour were observed throughout the night. A station in northeast Houston recorded over 26 inches of rain in almost 10 hours.

In response, the Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project was launched. TSARP is a joint study effort by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, and the Harris County Flood Control District, the District. The purpose of the TSARP project is to develop technical products that will assist the local community in recovery from the devastating flooding, and provide the community with a greater understanding of flooding and flood risks. The end product of the study is new Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

TSARP mission statement is: To assist residents of Harris County in recovery from Tropical Storm Allison and minimize damages from future floods by investigating the flood event and by developing current, accurate, and timely flood hazard information.

TSARP used state-of-the-art technology. TSARP has yielded many products that will help us better understand our flood risk. These products will assist citizens in making important decisions, and will assist public agencies in infrastructure planning. The hoped for end result of TSARP is a more informed and disaster resistant community and one that is better prepared.

Purchasing flood insurance before June 18 allowed people to "grandfather" their existing floodplain status and pay lower premiums for flood insurance. Once the maps became official on June 18, residents and business owners whose properties are categorized in higher-risk flood zones on the new maps may pay higher rates.

According to FEMA, a "Regulatory Floodway" means the channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a des-

ignated height. Communities must regulate development in these floodways to ensure that there are no increases in upstream flood elevations. For streams and other watercourses where FEMA has provided Base Flood Elevations, BFEs, but no floodway has been designated, the community must review floodplain development on a case-by-case basis to ensure that increases in water surface elevations do not occur, or identify the need to adopt a floodway if adequate information is available.

FEMA regulations say "Communities must regulate development in these floodways to ensure that there are no increases in upstream flood elevations." The City of Houston interprets that as no development within the floodway. This is not necessarily correct. Construction can take place but it cannot obstruct the water. Elevating the structure gets the same effect but the city denies this as they said (debris may collect under the structure). They will only allow a remodeling permit if the improvements do not exceed 50 percent of the structures value.

There is one neighborhood along White Oak Bayou that is greatly affected. The homes are of higher value than most of the district. Alternatives to resolve their issue includes widening the bayou or diverting floodwater.

The Harris County Flood District is now investigating these alternatives. Otherwise, the only solution would be a change in the city's ordinance allowing construction in the floodway.

I am looking forward to working with colleagues on the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee to explore ways and means of resolving this problem so that Houstonians will not be forced out of their homes and unable to afford flood insurance.

Mr. Chairman, let me provide this partial listing of some of the many good provisions in this legislation. First, H.R. 2641 will improve U.S. waterways and flood protection by increasing funding for the Army Corps of Engineers by \$713.4 million above the President's request to address a \$1 billion backlog of operations and needed maintenance. This backlog needs to be addressed to sustain the coastal and inland navigation infrastructure critical to the U.S. economy, and the gaps in flood protection highlighted in Hurricane Katrina.

Second, the legislation will help reduce dependence on foreign oil and cut greenhouse gas emissions. Renewable energy and energy efficiency programs are funded at \$1.9 billion—a 50 percent increase in energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. This is in addition to the additional \$300 million added in the FY 2007 joint resolution. In contrast, the President's FY 2008 request for renewable energy and energy efficiency research is the same as it was in 2001 in real terms.

Funding for research and development of alternative fuels such as corn based and cellulosic ethanol and biodiesel is increased by 40 percent above the President's request. Solar Energy demonstration projects receive a 34 percent increase above the President's request. There is also \$22 million to research new ways of generating power from water flow, and \$44.3 million for geothermal energy, neither of which were funded in the President's request. (This is on top of the \$95 million for upgrades to existing hydropower dams funded under the Army Corps.)

I could go on and on. This thoughtful legislation provides funding to invest in new vehicle technology; energy efficient buildings; weatherization; carbon capture and sequestration; and climate change science. And it cuts wasteful spending as well.

For example, H.R. 2641 directs the Energy Department to develop a concrete plan to improve its contract management. The Energy Department has been on the GAO list of programs that are at high-risk for waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement for seventeen years in a row.

The bill also cuts Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, GNEP, funding by \$285 million below the President's request and \$47.5 million below 2007 for this initiative to reprocess spent nuclear fuel and burn long-lived radioactive materials. There are concerns that this project is unsafe, will cost tens of billions of dollars, and could make it far easier for terrorists to obtain plutonium to make nuclear weapons.

The bill also secures substantial savings by cutting wasteful and unnecessary nuclear weapons programs by \$5.9 billion, \$632 million below the President's request and \$396 million below 2007. It cuts to 37 specific weapons program accounts, including the Reliable Replacement Warhead program. The existing stockpile will continue to provide the Nation's nuclear deterrent for the next two decades, and certainly until the President develops a strategic nuclear weapons plan to transform the nuclear weapons complex away from its expensive Cold War configuration to a more affordable, sustainable structure.

Mr. Chairman, I strongly support H.R. 2641 and urge my colleagues to join me. I thank Chairman VISCLOSKEY for his fine work in bringing this exceptional legislation to the House floor where it should receive an overwhelmingly favorable vote.

Mr. VISCLOSKEY. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ALTMIRE) having assumed the chair, Mr. ANDREWS, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2641) making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

EMMETT TILL UNSOLVED CIVIL RIGHTS CRIME ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the title to H.R. 923 is amended so as to read: "A bill to provide for the investigation of certain unsolved civil rights crimes, and for other purposes."

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2764,

and that I may include tabular material on the same.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 498 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2764.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2764) making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes, with Mr. CAPUANO in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to present to the House H.R. 2764, the fiscal year 2008 appropriations bill for the Department of State, foreign operations and related programs.

I'm particularly pleased that the appropriations bill that I bring to the floor as chairwoman of the State Foreign Operations Subcommittee reflects a bipartisan process, and that the ranking member, FRANK WOLF, was instrumental in pulling this bill together, as well as a very talented and engaged subcommittee.

I'm very proud of our product. The bill before you totals \$34.243 billion in new discretionary budget authority, \$2.9 billion above fiscal year 2007, not counting supplemental appropriations, and \$700 million below the President's request. This is the largest increase over the prior year enacted level that this subcommittee has received in over a decade. I appreciate Chairman OBEY's recognition of the importance of this bill and the programs it funds.

The bill includes over \$7 billion to address our strategic priorities and national security interests, as well as increases for programs that promote development and reduce low global poverty, meet humanitarian needs, and respond to urgent health crises, priorities at the core of our interests abroad.

For the war on terror, this bill includes \$2.656 billion in economic assistance for our strategic partners and \$4.509 billion in military assistance. While the bill includes \$1.057 billion for Afghanistan, there are no additional funds for Iraq. In light of the \$2.86 billion provided for Iraq reconstruction in the recently passed supplemental appropriations bill, and the \$2.89 billion requested by the administration in the 2008 supplemental, I feel extremely strongly that there is no need at this time for additional funds for the same purposes in this bill, given the extraordinary needs to be met around the world.

The bill includes over \$4.7 billion to support State Department operations, both in the United States and abroad. The recommendation fully funds the President's request for worldwide security upgrades, and provides \$364 million for public diplomacy efforts at the State Department, as well as \$501 million for educational and cultural exchanges.

The bill also provides \$6.517 billion for global health. Addressing tuberculosis, avian flu, HIV/AIDS and other health threats is one of the best preventive measures to protect the health of the United States. We provide \$5.082 billion for international HIV/AIDS efforts, which, in addition to appropriations in other bills, brings the total for international HIV/AIDS to \$5.876 billion. This is \$550 million above the President's fiscal year 2008 budget request, and includes \$850 million for the global fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

The bill also includes \$1.73 billion for development programs managed by the U.S. Agency for International Development, an increase of \$225 million above the fiscal year 2007 enacted level. The increased resources will fund an initiative on basic education for developing countries, as well as an expansion of safe water and environment programs.

As many of you know, basic education has been one of my top priorities for years and, I'm pleased to say, a top priority of the members of this committee. I'm convinced that access to quality primary education not only improves an individual's chances for a better, more productive life, it creates a more tolerant and informed citizenry. I've provided a total of \$750 million for basic education in the bill, an increase of \$200 million from the fiscal year 2007 House-passed bill.

This bill also provides \$501 million for the environment and clean energy programs, including \$106 million for the global environmental facility, and \$175 million for biodiversity programs at USAID. We've also included a provision that encourages the Export-Import Bank to support projects in renewable energy and other environmentally beneficial products. This initiative could result in an estimated \$1 billion in additional green exports in 2008.

There is \$1.8 billion for the Millennium Challenge Account. This is a \$1.2

billion reduction from the request, but \$48 million above the fiscal year 2007 enacted level. I'm supportive of the MCA. I want to make this very clear. And while I believe the MCA is under the strong and capable management of Ambassador Danilovich, I would like to see more results on the ground from the \$6 billion that has already been appropriated, \$2.1 billion of which is not yet even obligated, before we significantly scale-up the MCA. The reduction to MCA helps us address the shortfalls for development assistance and health accounts. We have also funded a basic education initiative as well as expansion of safe water and environmental programs.

With an investment of over \$5 billion in the 6 years that Plan Colombia has been in effect, the numbers of hectares involved in coca production has increased by 42 percent. Because our efforts to combat narcotics in Colombia have been ineffective for some time, this bill restructures assistance for Colombia. We cut overall funding by 10 percent, or \$59 million, and shift greater resources to the development, interdiction, rule of law and justice programs. It is time for the Colombians to take ownership over their eradication and military assistance programs, and this cut reflects that position.

The bill provides over \$5.4 billion for Africa, including a total of \$949.3 million for Sudan, \$210.5 million of which is for Darfur, \$104 million above the request. We have provided \$100 million in increased funding for the African Union Force in Darfur.

This bill allows us to fully meet the President's request for Israel and Egypt. And I want to make it clear that Egypt is a friend, an important ally in the war on terror and a partner for peace in the Middle East. However, there are growing concerns about the independence of its judiciary, police abuses, and the smuggling operation from Egypt into Gaza. As a result, this bill requires the Secretary of State to certify that steps are being taken to address these issues before a portion of the military aid to Egypt can be released.

Lastly, as you know, U.S. Government assistance for family planning is prohibited for groups that provide, promote, refer or counsel on abortions. Groups that merely exercise their legal rights to advocate for policies such as the legalization of abortion are denied U.S. assistance. This bill provides an exemption to those restrictions simply for the provision of contraceptive commodities. Foreign family planning organizations, which have been denied USAID family planning funds, could receive contraceptives from USAID to help reduce unintended and high-risk pregnancies, abortions and the spread of HIV, as well as save the lives of mothers and infants.

This provision does not amend any of the provisions in existing law that prohibit assistance for abortions or otherwise restrict family planning funds.